

U.S.C. S 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Richardson reference in view of the Dat reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,831,818).

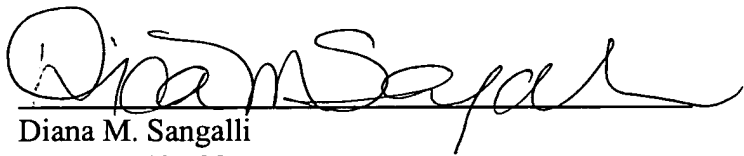
The Examiner's rejections are respectfully traversed because each of the rejections is based on the Richardson reference, which is not prior art. It is noted that the Richardson reference has a filing date of March 10, 1999, and claims priority to an application filed on September 28, 1998. The present application was filed on June 12, 1998, which is prior to the filing date of both the cited Richardson reference and the parent of the Richardson reference. Accordingly, because the Richardson reference does not qualify as prior art under any provision of 35 U.S.C. § 102, withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-40 is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the above remarks, Applicant respectfully requests allowance of claims 1-40. If the Examiner believes that a telephonic interview will help speed this application toward issuance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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